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Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 09474

EXDIS
CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR UK RH
SUBJECT: RHODESIA: BRIEFING OF SITHOLE

1. JOHNNY GRAHAM (WITH STEELE AND FLYNN) ON JUNE 8 BRIEFED NDABANINGI SITHOLE AND HIS SIX-MAN DELEGATION ON THE PROGRESS OF THE RHODESIA CONSULTATIVE GROUP. EMBASSY OFFICER JOINED THE SESSION AS SILENT PARTNER. GRAHAM EXPLAINED CAREFULLY THE GROUP'S PREVIOUS CONSULTATIONS WITH OTHER NATIONALIST LEADERS AND WITH THE GOVERNMENT IN SALISBURY. A BROAD MEASURE OF AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED, HE SAID, ON THE OUTLINE OF AN INDEPENDENCE CONSTITUTION. THE WHITES HAVE RESISTED THE CONCEPT OF UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE BUT MAY CONCEDE THIS POINT IF OTHER REASSURING TERMS CAN BE INCLUDED IN AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT.
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2. SITHOLE EXPRESSED HIS GRATITUDE THAT THE UNITED STATES' ROLE WAS NO LONGER DEFINED AS FORMAL "CO-SPONSORSHIP" OF A CONFERENCE, AND SAID HE WAS PLEASED TO SEE THAT THE U.S. AND U.K. WERE NEGOTIATING CLOSELY WITH THE PARTIES DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE DISPUTE AND NOT WITH OUTSIDERS SUCH AS THE FRONT LINE PRESIDENTS.

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HE THEN EXOLAINED HIS CURRENT EFFORTS TO RETURN TO RHODESIA, SAYING THAT THE TERMS LAID DOWN BY THE REGIME (THAT HE RENOUNCE "TERRORISM") WERE IMPOSSIBLE AND SEEMED DESIGNED TO UNDERMINE HIS OWN POSITION.

3. ON CONSTITUTIONAL POINTS, SITHOLE SAID UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE IS ESSENTIAL BUT THAT HE DOES NOT FEEL STRONGLY ONE WAY OR THE OTHER ON THE QUESTION OF A MINIMUM AGE. ZIMBABWE SHOULD BE A REPUBLIC, HE SAID, WITH AN EXECUTIVE PRESIDENT. HE IS PREPARED TO DISCUSS A TEMPORARY PROVISION FOR RESERVED SEATS IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE WHITE CONFIDENCE. A JUSTICIABLE BILL OF RIGHTS IS ACCEPTABLE; AN INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY "IS A MUST." SITHOLE SAID THAT PENSION OBLIGATIONS, BECAUSE THEY RELATE TO THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATION, SHOULD BE ASSUMED BY THE INDEPENDENT GOVERNMENT. (SITHOLE'S GROUP WILL MEET WITH STEELE ON FRIDAY TO DISCUSS THE CONSTITUTION IN MORE DETAIL.)

4. SITHOLE ARGUED THAT SMITH, WHO HAS BEEN THE CONSTANT FACTOR IN ALL THE PREVIOUS FAILED EFFORTS TO REACH A SETTLEMENT, SHOULD STEP DOWN NOW IN ORDER TO OPEN THE WAY TO A GENUINE AGREEMENT. GRAHAM SAID IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO MAKE SMITH QUIT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PROCESS BUT STRESSED THAT CIRCUMSTANCES IN RHODESIA HAD CHANGED AND THAT WHITES SEEMED PREPARED TO SETTLE IF MINIMUM DEMANDS COULD BE MET. STEELE EXPLAINED THAT THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP IS ATTEMPTING TO DEVELOP A "MIX" OF PROPOSALS THAT WILL INSPIRE WHITE CONFIDENCE. SOME ELEMENTS ARE OF CONFIDENTIAL

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SUBSTANCE, SUCH AS A BILL OF RIGHTS, SOME ARE TEMPORARY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL, SUCH AS RESERVED SEATS, AND SOME ARE PRACTICAL, SUCH AS PENSIONS. SETTLEMENT CAN BE ACHIEVED WITH THE RIGHT RECIPE. SITHOLE AGREED WITH THIS APPROACH.

5. SITHOLE EXPRESSED SUSPICION OF COMMONWEALTH PARTICI-PATION IN A CARETAKER GOVERNMENT. GRAHAM EXPLAINED THAT WHILE A STRAIGHTFORWARD REVERSION TO BRITISH COLONIAL STATUS WOULD BE THE SIMPLEST SOLUTION TO THE TRANSITION PROBLEM, IT WAS POLITICALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR HMG TO ASSUME THIS RESPONSIBILITY ALONE.

6. COMMENT: SITHOLE WAS THE ESSENCE OF SWEET REASON THROUGHOUT THE DISCUSSION.

BREWSTER

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